

Narrative summary of the Marshfield Planning Commission's town survey of 2014

Marshfield is due to update their current zoning regulations for town meeting 2016. In August 2014 the Marshfield Planning Commission sent out a survey to all taxpayers and residents to get input. Approximately 10% of surveys were returned. Reported here are the recurring themes from responders. A full report can be viewed at the town website, planning and zoning page.

Most of those responding are residents from all over Marshfield and have lived less than 30 years in town in the Rural Residential/Agricultural district and their homes were built between 1960 and 2004 though we have many historic houses.

In their words what they liked most about where they live is good neighbors and community, few neighbors and privacy, beauty, forest and open fields, and good roads and road crew. They miss less traffic and peace and quiet. The least desirable aspects are traffic, speeding, noise, and high taxes (with few services). Most commute to work but about one third have a home business.

When asked to define 'rural character' many said farms, gardens, and agriculture, forest and wildlife, open land and fields, low density, little development, little traffic, dirt roads, peaceful, private and quiet, and small local community. Suggestions for any development in the village showed interest in restaurant, pub, affordable healthy groceries, small local service businesses, sidewalks and crosswalks, and elder housing. Development in the town included more agriculture, home occupations, elder housing, and no further development. Over three-quarters of those responding believe Marshfield could provide basic needs with economic development from within with a more comprehensive general store and especially with affordable healthful fresh local groceries. Most respondents shop in Marshfield Village more than once a week, but buy less than 10%, mostly gas, for groceries are not affordable.

Most responders have little familiarity with our zoning regulations but feel the current system is fine or needs work as opposed to perfect or terrible and most disagree that zoning should be repealed. Many would like to separate Agriculture from Rural Residential zone. Most agree that wetlands and significant wildlife habitat should be protected, historic structures should be preserved, there should be incentives to encourage agricultural use of farmland, and that affordable housing should be encouraged, and that it is a good idea and would like elder housing apartments in the village.

The most important question was stated a bit confusing regarding how far back the buildable area could be, but the overall consensus from both those who have familiarity with our regulations and those that do not was that most want an increase in the distance.

We are still looking for feedback. We will have an information table set up at our 2015 Town Meeting. You can communicate with us via email to marshfieldvtpc@gmail.com or in writing delivered to the town clerk's office. Please give us your input. Thank you very much.